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## HB 886 RELATING TO BEVERAGE CONTAINERS

Statement for  
House Committee on  
Ecology and Environmental Protection  
Public Hearing, 23 February 1979

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HB 886 would add a new chapter relating to beverage containers to the Hawaii Revised Statutes. This chapter would require the establishment of a refundable deposit system for beverage containers. This statement on the bill does not reflect an institutional position of the University.

Beverage container legislation similar to that proposed in HB 886 has been introduced for several successive years.

Proponents of the so called bottle bills have justified them on the grounds that if empty beverage containers had a significant value that could be realized upon their return:

- 1) There would be a significant decrease in the promiscuous discard of the containers and a reduction in litter.
- 2) There would be a saving of material or energy through recycling of the containers or the material of which they were made.

Opponents of the bill have claimed that:

- 1) A State-required deposit/return system was not practicable in Hawaii because of the magnitude of beverage sales under the control of the federal military.
- 2) The energy and materials savings would be much smaller than estimated by the proponents.
- 3) The beverage container contribution is only a small part of the litter problem.
- 4) The economic costs of the container-return and refundable deposit system would outweigh its benefits.

- 5) Other mechanisms for controlling litter would be more effective and were being instituted.

Both proponents and opponents cited the experiences of other states, some of which had adopted equivalent deposit-return systems and others of which had opted for reliance on other mechanisms for litter control.

In reviews of the bottle bills considered earlier, the Environmental Center has pointed out that:

- 1) It could no longer be claimed legitimately that the magnitude of beverage sales under the control of the military would limit the effectiveness of a State-required refundable deposit system, because the State could influence greatly the application of now available equivalent federal regulations to the federal establishments in Hawaii.
- 2) Even if the beverage container contribution to the litter problem were small, and other mechanisms for controlling litter were available and being used, the refundable-deposit system would supplement the other mechanisms and should be evaluated accordingly.
- 3) The evaluations of the experiences in other states seemed to come to different conclusions depending on the biases of the evaluators.
- 4) There seemed to be no sound overall evaluation of the probable effects of a refundable deposit system in Hawaii.

Since the introduction of the bottle bills in the last legislature, a new more comprehensive survey has been made of local litter (D. B. Syrek, A baseline survey of litter on the island of Oahu, Institute for Applied Research, Sacramento, March 1978) and an overall evaluation has been made of the probable effects of a refundable deposit system by Hugh Folk, James Strachen, and James Wills of the University of Hawaii College of Business Administration. At the time of preparation of this statement the report by Folk et. al., which was prepared for the Office of Environmental Quality Control and the Department of Planning and Economic Development. It is regrettable tht it has not been freely available for the review of both proponents and opponents of bottle bill legislation prior to this hearing, so that they might point out possible weaknesses in the data or analyses it incorporates. I trust that the report, at least, will be made available to this committee for use in considering HB 886.

Because the report has not been released, it would be inappropriate in this statement to cite details of its conclusions. However, in order to provide this committee with some guidance in the remote chance the report is not made available to it, the following general conclusions of the report are provided with Dr. Folk's approval. Bottle bill legislation such as HB 886 would result in:

- 1) Significant public benefits in the form of litter reduction.
- 2) More employment, but some employment dislocation.
- 3) Some energy conservation, but principally on the mainland.
- 4) Substantial increase in costs to beverage consumers.

The benefits do not seem to the authors of the report to outweigh the costs, and in the report they have pointed out alternative means to cope with the beverage container contribution to the litter problem.

If, as I expect, the report itself is made available to this Committee, the Committee should rely on the report itself rather than the above comments, and should seek such amplification as may be desired from Dr. Folk and his co-authors.

Because the report by Folk et. al. contains so much information as to the effects of establishing a refundable deposit system for beverage containers, it should seem to me a mistake to require the establishment until the report has been available to the public.